

NEWS/Advisory

From Supervisor Bill Postmus

First District, San Bernardino County



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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YOUTH CENTER GRAND OPENING MONDAY

-Media, Elected Officials to Tour Newly Constructed Hesperia Facility-

HESPERIA — County Supervisor Bill Postmus will host a Grand Opening ceremony and a tour for elected officials, invited guests and the news media on Monday, February 23 at 2 p.m. at the newly constructed Fred D. Jones Youth Center. The facility is located at 16955 Lemon Street in Hesperia.

The youth residential assessment and treatment center is the result of an agreement between the County of San Bernardino and VisionQuest/Lodgemakers of California, a youth services organization with 30 years of experience. The 65,000 square-foot facility includes six buildings on 15 acres and cost about \$5 million to build.

The facility is named in honor of Fredrick Douglas Jones, a member of an all-African-American Army unit during World War II. Members of the all-African-American units, known as "Buffalo Soldiers," were historically instrumental in the settlement of the American west. VisionQuest youth and staff are well known for their re-enactments of Buffalo Soldier life and events. Jones died at the age of 79, just three weeks after attending the groundbreaking for the facility in December 2002. Jones was a member of the VisionQuest/Lodgemakers Board of Directors.

The 144-bed facility will provide a place where youth referred by San Bernardino County Juvenile Court can be assessed and treated. Young boys will stay at the facility for periods of two weeks to several months, depending on their needs. Traditional components of VisionQuest treatment programs, such as outdoor activities, will be offered to youth at the center. Professional staff will provide close supervision 24 hours a day. There will be an on-site school operated by the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools. VisionQuest will also be delivering mental health services at the center under a contract with the County Department of Behavioral Health.

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Youth Center
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The center was developed in response to a request for proposals approved by the County Board of Supervisors and issued by the Probation department. On January 15, 2002, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a 10-year contract with VisionQuest that brought the project to life. The private-provider contract represents one component of a “Sufficiency Plan” approved by the Board of Supervisors and the State Department of Corrections.

VisionQuest’s total annual payroll will eventually exceed \$4.5 million and expenditures for ancillary services to support the operation of the facility are expected to exceed \$3.5 million annually. The program is expected to bring an estimated 200 new jobs to the High Desert region.

“This facility will not only help provide positive direction to youth in our community—it will also provide many private-sector jobs to strengthen our local economy,” said Supervisor Postmus.

The San Bernardino County Jobs and Employment Services Department is assisting with the employee recruitment process. Interested applicants can get information about the positions available at www.jesd.com or by calling 1(800) 451-JOBS.

Media representatives planning to attend the opening and tour should contact Brad Mitzelfelt at (909) 387-4830.